

Veterans Bulletin

Georgia Department of Veterans Service

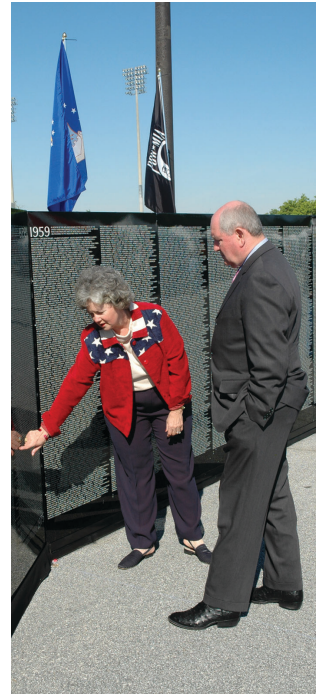
Sonny Perdue
Governor

Pete Wheeler
Commissioner

Georgia Veterans...guardians of liberty
Spring 2005

Recognizing All Who Served between July 1, 1958 and May 7, 1975

Tribute to the Vietnam War Generation



Governor Sonny Perdue as the keynote speaker and Commissioner Pete Wheeler as Master of Ceremonies headlined the numerous dignitaries on hand for the opening ceremonies to an Atlanta area five-day observance of the 30th anniversary marking the end to the Vietnam War.

The events, with the Vietnam War Memorial "Moving Wall" as a centerpiece, took place May 4 – 8, at Georgia International Horse Park in Conyers, GA.

The Georgia Veterans Leadership Program (GVLP) hosted this tribute dedicated to recognizing Georgia veterans and their families involved in the Vietnam Conflict/ War.

"Many people returning from Vietnam did not receive the hero's welcome they deserved when they came home," Governor Perdue told the opening ceremony crowd of several hundred people. "You protected freedom, and let no one say otherwise."

Pointing out that some 228,000 Georgians served during the Vietnam War/Conflict, Commissioner Wheeler said "This is a salute to their patriotism and bravery . . . our way to thank and honor their endurance and courage – especially Georgia's 21 former prisoners of war and the 8,534 wounded in action. This is our tribute to the 1,584 Georgians whose names appear on The Wall and the 35 native sons whose whereabouts are still unknown or unaccounted for."

Governor Perdue, an Air Force veteran, also praised the many veteran organizations that provide assistance to veterans and their families, adding that they are "all part of a greater community of service."



After the ceremony, Commissioner Wheeler was joined at the Memorial's "Moving Wall" by (from left to right) State Senator John Douglas of Covington, Chairman of the Senate's Veterans and Military Affairs Committee; Tommy Clack, GVLP President; Joanne Shirley of Dalton, National Chairwoman of the League of POW/MIA Families; and James Gilmer of Gainesville, State Council President, Vietnam Veterans of America.

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A Facelift for the Tomb of the Unknowns

VA partners with the Army to replace the 73-year-old monument

Vanguard

March/April 2005

By Michael Nacincik

Last November, VA and the Department of the Army signed a joint agreement to replace the Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery. The main part of the Tomb, crafted from a 55-ton block of solid marble, has stood adjacent to the Memorial Amphitheatre overlooking Washington, D.C. since 1932.

The 73-year old monument is being replaced because of two large cracks that travel completely around the Tomb.

Because the Tomb of the Unknowns is considered a government headstone, the Army asked VA through the National Cemetery Administration to acquire an identical replacement. MCA

will solicit, award, and fund the contracts to create the replacement Tomb, including procurement of the stone, sculpting marble and transporting the new Tomb to Arlington.

The original Tomb came from Yule Quarry in Colorado. It was designed by Lorimer Rich and sculpted by Thomas Hudson-Jones.

The Tomb consists of seven pieces of marble – the sub-base (four), base, die and cap. VA will replace only the base die and cap. The die cap is the main part that most people think of as the Tomb; it includes the north and south faces with wreaths, the west face with the words “Here rests in honored glory an American soldier known but to God,” and the east face with the

three Greek figures representing Peace, Victory and Valor.

Since the drawings used to create the original Tomb were lost, one of the first steps in the replacement process was to create a blueprint of the Tomb. The Army turned to Direct Dimensions Inc., of Maryland, to capture digital images of the Tomb of the Unknowns.

Using the latest technology, Direct Dimensions recorded the precise specifications of the Tomb. Rather



than using video or photographs to create two-dimensional images, laser scanners were used to create an exact three-dimensional model. The scanning picked up barely visible marks and details that video and photographs don't.

The three dimensional model replaces the original blueprints. Not only will the information be used in contracting for the sculpting of the Tomb, it will also help with the actual sculpting. The three dimensional model will be loaded into computer-assisted milling machines that use lasers to do the initial sculpting to within 1 inch of specifications. Then sculptors will complete the finished work by hand.

NCA estimates it will take 18 months before the replacement Tomb is ready for delivery to Arlington. The Original Tomb will be donated to the Smithsonian National Museum of American History.

Standing Guard

In all types of weather, a sentinel takes 21-step paces to the front of the tomb. The soldier then makes a 90-degree facing movement to face east, pausing for 21 seconds.

The sentinel then executes a “shoulder-arms” movement, switching the shoulder that holds the rifle, always keeping the weapon on the shoulder opposite of the sarcophagus to signify that he stands between the tomb and any threat. He then marches north, repeating the process as he marches north, repeating the process as he marches on the 63-foot black mat in front of the tomb. The number in the drill alludes to the 21-gun salute, the highest military honor paid to any military or foreign dignitary.

The sentinel is relieved every hour year round, and every half hour during daylight hours April through September. The tomb has been guarded since March 24, 1926 under the Washington Provisional Brigade. Twenty-four hour sentinels have been active since midnight on July 2, 1937. The Old Guard has maintained a sentinel since 1948.

Women are eligible and have served as sentinels. The current commander of the guard is Capt. Carrie Wibben.



State Veterans Service Board Elects New Leadership

SDVS News Release

Georgia's seven-member, governor-appointed State Veterans Service Board recently elected new officers for 2005-06.

Ray Hendrix, a retired Army Sergeant Major and resident of Statesboro, was elected as the new board chairman. Hendrix retired from the Army in 1992 after serving 42 years in uniform. He was appointed to the Veterans Service Board in September 2001.

Hendrix is an active member in The American Legion at the local, state, and national levels. He currently serves as Georgia's National Executive Committeeman and as a member of The Legion's National Legislative and International Affairs Commissions.

Over the years, Hendrix, a past state commander, also served on The Legion's National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation, Military Affairs, and Americanism Commissions. Hendrix, a retired Bulloch County Magistrate Court Constable, is a member of the Statesboro's American Legion Post 90, Scottish Rite Temple, and Shriners Club.

Marine Corps veteran

Fred T. Fincher, Sr., a native and life long resident of LaGrange, was elected board vice chairman. Fincher, appointed to the board in April 2004, previously served on the VSB from 1993 to 2000.

Fincher, a veteran of WWII and Korea, is a well known businessman in the LaGrange/Troup County community. He owned and operated both the Vernon Street Billiard Parlor and the Fincher (Uniroyal Distributorship) Tire Company for some 18 years. He also managed the

Pepsi Cola Distributorship of Troup County and worked for the LaGrange Daily News in Advertising/Sales.

Fincher is an active life-member of American Legion Post 75. Along with serving as post commander, he has also served as a state district commander. He is also a life-member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Disabled American Veterans. Fincher is past president of the

Blaylock, a United States Marine Corps veteran who served in Vietnam, has worked for the U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs since 1972. He is currently the Prosthetics Service Line Manager for all Veteran Health Administration medical facilities in Georgia, Alabama, and South Carolina.

Serving as members of the Veterans Service Board for 2005-06

with Hendrix, Fincher, and Blaylock are Barbara Jean Aaron of Warner Robins, Kenneth Birdsong of Gordon, Richard Harris of Cochran, and Pat Phillips of Blairsville.

Also taking place at its March meeting, the VSB unanimously elected Pete Wheeler to another four-year term as Georgia Commissioner of Veterans Affairs. Wheeler's new term,



Veterans Service Board members shown here at the 2005 Service Officer School. Pictured above from left to right are: Fred T. Fincher of LaGrange, Ray Hendrix of Statesboro, James Blaylock of Decatur, Barbara Jean Aaron of Warner Robins, Pat Phillips of Blairsville and Kenneth Birdsong of Gordon. Richard Harris of Cochran is not shown.

LaGrange Optimist Club and the LaGrange Shriners Club.

Vietnam veteran James Blaylock, a long time Decatur resident and local Dekalb County veterans advocate, was selected secretary. He has served on the State Veterans Service Board since 2002.

Blaylock, a native of Dougherty County, has been active in local veterans' issues since making Decatur home in 1978. He was a founding board member of the Georgia Veterans Leadership Program and the Dekalb County Veterans Affairs Task Force.

A past National Commander of the Military Order of the Purple Heart (1996-97), Blaylock is also a member of the National Memorial Day Association of Georgia and is vice-president of the Georgia Veterans Day Parade Association of Atlanta.

his fourteenth consecutive, was effective April 1st and runs through March of 2009.

Commissioner Wheeler began his service to the Georgia Department of Veterans Service in 1949. He has served as the agency's department head under 11 governors.

"Commissioner Wheeler remains the Georgia veteran's number one advocate," said Fincher in the nomination process. "He continues to be called upon by veteran officials at all levels for advice and counsel – his knowledge and experience on issues affecting veterans is tremendous and unsurpassed."

The State Board of Veterans Service recommends policy, procedure and work projects and through the Georgia Commissioner of Veterans Affairs controls the overall veteran's policy for the state.

Georgia National Cemetery

Cherokee County, Georgia

Department of Veterans Affairs
National Cemetery Administration
April 2005

VA expects to open the new cemetery for burials in Spring 2006 with a patriotic ceremony, even though not all the structures will be completed at that time.

This “early turn over” plan is aimed at serving as many of the region’s aging veterans as possible. During the “early turn over,” grave space will be available for casketed remains and in-ground burial of the cremated remains in a small-scale development separate

from the major phase- one construction project.

Burial arrangements will be made after death, as with all national cemeteries. VA does not

reserve grave space. Veterans or spouses wishing to be buried in national cemeteries should have the veteran’s military separation papers available to establish eligibility, which requires an other-

than honorable discharge.

Dependent children may also be buried. For more information contact Cemetery Director Sandra Beckley (866) 236-8159 or email at sbeckley@cem.va.gov



Continued from Front

Other tributes, designed to enhance the image of and educate the general public about the Vietnam Era veteran and their families, included a program honoring Georgia’s POW/MIA and the reading of Georgia’s unaccounted, a salute to Georgia’s National Guard and Reservists, and a closing ceremony saluting Georgia’s Gold Star Wives & Mothers.

Other dignitaries that attended the events were State Senator

John Douglas of Covington, Chairman of the Senate Veterans and Military Affairs Committee, MG David Poythress, Adjutant General, Georgia National Guard, JoAnne Shirley of Dalton, National Chairwoman of the League of Families of POW/MIAs, Ben Purcell of Clarkesville, retired Army Colonel and former Vietnam POW for some 5 ½ years, and Creighton Abrams, retired Army General.

The “Moving Wall” is an authentic half-size replica of the Vietnam Memorial located in Washington, D.C. It is 252 feet in length and lists the names of the 58,228 men and women who lost their lives in the Vietnam War.

GVLP initiated the resolution that was passed by the 2005 Georgia General Assembly commending Vietnam Veterans and their families and recognizing May 4-8, 2005, as the state’s



official tribute to the anniversary observance to the end of the Vietnam War.

The GVLP is a non-profit organization that has been working for more than 25 years coordinating public events to enhance the public image and perception of the military, veterans and their families.



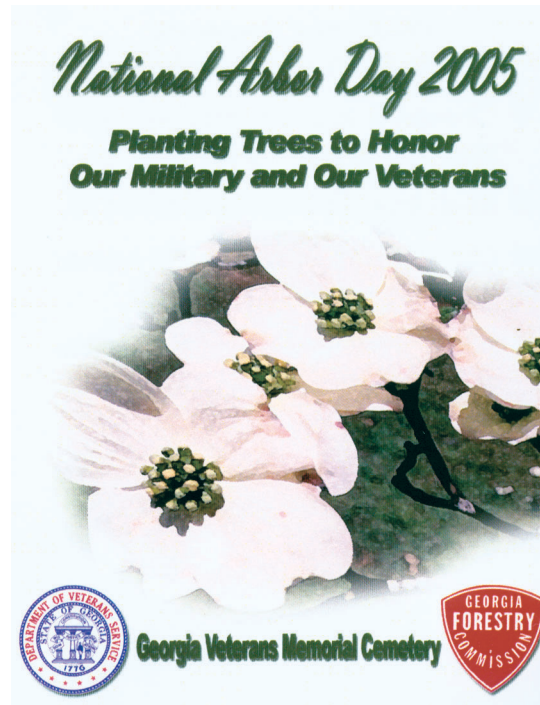
Tommy Clack GVLP President and event coordinator with Georgia’s Gold Star Wives & Mothers.



Arbor Day 2005 Celebrated at Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery



Georgia National Guard's Youth Challenge Academy Color Guard



National Arbor Day, founded by J. Sterling Morton in 1872, is a celebrated observance encouraging tree planting and tree care. April 29th marked the 133rd anniversary of this holiday.



"The Georgia veterans that these trees we plant here will honor, faced the greatest test that can be applied to American citizenship – the test of being willing to risk their lives to defend our citizenship. This is a defining gesture of patriotism."
- Commissioner Wheeler
2005 Arbor Day remarks



Following the program, Commissioner Wheeler was joined by (from left to right) Mr. Ken Birdsong of Gordon, Member of the State Veterans Service Board; BG Scott A. Hammond, Commander, Georgia Air National Guard; Ken Stewart, Director, Georgia Forestry Commission; Jessica Black, Miss Georgia Forestry 2005; and Mr. Jim Gillis of Soperton, Board Member of the Georgia Forestry Commission for the ceremonial tree planting.

Georgia veterans...guardians of liberty

Thousands of Gulf War Medical Records Find New Home in St. Louis

*Austin Camacho
Deployment Quarterly
Winter 2004-2005*

After the 1991 Gulf War, veterans expressed concerns about possible health effects related to their service. In response to those concerns, the Department of Defense initiated the Comprehensive Clinical Evaluation Program. The program provided in-depth medical examinations to approximately 40,000 service members and family members before a broader program replaced it. In September 2004, DoD moved the archived records of the CCEP from the National Archives and Records Administration in Washington, D.C., to the National Personnel Records in St. Louis, Mo.

"We are the personnel data center for military records," said Eric Voelz of the National Personnel Records Center. "We are working to get other record collections here: military personnel files, military medical records and now CCEP records."

The Comprehensive Clinical Evaluation Program offered medical exams to any Gulf War veteran who wanted them, but participation in the program was voluntary. Some members were concerned that illness revealed during these medical examinations might damage their military careers. In order to encourage Gulf War veterans to participate in the program, exam results were kept separate from mainstream medical records unless the service member requested otherwise.

Those separate records—some 760 boxes, each holding about 50 records—now reside with other military records at the National Personnel Records Center.

Today, they are important to the individual participants as evidence of health problems that may not appear anywhere else. It makes sense that

they be stored near the other military health records. The basic health record is filed with each veteran's official military personnel file, but separated from it when he or she leaves the military.

"Those health records don't come here when the personnel record does," Voelz said. "They go directly to the (Department of Veterans Affairs) records management center. That is outpatient stuff that happens while a service member is on active duty including dental work." The Department of Veterans Affairs records management center that gets those health records is also in St. Louis.

Comprehensive Clinical Evaluation Program records will not automatically be called when veterans request medical records. Because these records are not identified by hospital or date, they will be annotated in a separate database.

"When the requestor tells us CCEP, then we know to look in that. I don't believe we're going to routinely look in that for every request we get," said Voelz.

So, if a veteran wants his CCEP records he or she should specifically ask for them. Copies of these records are easy to request, as are copies of personnel and medical records. The easiest way is to order them on line through the veteran's records or VETRECS Web site.

Military veterans, or next of kin of a deceased military member or a former member of military can initiate the request by clicking on the "Request Military Records" button. They will have to enter some basic information, then print, sign and date the signature verification area of customized form. The final step is to

mail or fax the signature verification form to records center.

Veterans should be prepared for their requests to take a little time, perhaps as long as a month. The National Personnel Records Center receives as many as 6,000 pieces of mail per day, and generally requests are handled on a first-come, first-served basis. However, Voelz says, that there are exceptions.

"If someone writes for information for a medical emergency, or if they need to bury someone in a VA cemetery, or if they're a homeless veteran, they could get an answer within a day," Voelz said adding that if someone requesting documents is facing any kind of deadline, they should make that very clear in their letter. That will change where their request will fit in their priorities.

For More Information:

To obtain a copy of CCEP record, you may write to the National Personnel Records Center, Military Personnel Records 9700 Page Avenue, St. Louis, Mo. 63132-5100.

You may also send a fax to: (314) 801-9195 or call their customer service member number at (314) 801-0800.

Visit the site on line at: http://www.archives.gov/facilities/mo/st_louis/military_personnel_records.html

Request records on line at: http://www.archives.gov/research_room/vetreces

Blood Pressure: Silent Killer Lurks

Deployment Quarterly Winter 2004-2005

When is the last time you had your blood pressure checked? It's a simple procedure that could help prevent serious medical problems or even save your life.

A blood pressure check measures the pressure within the arteries that carry blood away from the heart.

When the heart contracts, the systolic pressure-top number –increases, and when the heart relaxes, the diastolic pressure-bottom number – decreases, providing two measured values when blood pressure is taken.

When numbers are within a range that may cause damage to the vessel wall, a person is considered to have hypertension, or high blood pressure.

Elevations in either the systolic or diastolic values can have harmful health effects.

High blood pressure is very common, with about 50 million Americans diagnosed. According to a 2002 National Ambulatory Medical Care Survey, it's the most common

primary medical diagnosis, accounting for more than 35 million annual trips to the doctor's office.

Yet 30 percent of people with this disorder are unaware of it because of the non-specific nature of early warning signs. Commonly, the diagnosis is only made after "cardiovascular events" such as a heart attack, stroke, loss of vision and kidney failure.

The classic threshold values for diagnosis of high blood pressure is a reading of 140/90. However, many people have other diseases that may place them at risk at a much lower reading. Since different blood pressures may have varying affects on people with other health conditions, the Joint National Committee on Prevention, Detection, Evaluation and Treatment of High Blood Pressure developed a classification system to help doctors decide when treatment should start and how aggressive it should be.

A systolic blood pressure less than 120 and a diastolic value than 80 define normal. Pre-hypertension is when the systolic values ranges from 120 to 139 or the diastolic reading is 80 to 89.

Stage 1 hypertension has a systolic blood pressure between 140 to 159 or diastolic value from 90 to 99 and Stage 2 is blood pressure greater than 160 over 100.

Treatment depend on how high the blood pressure is and whether there are other medical conditions, such as diabetes, heart failure previous heart attack or stroke, chronic kidney disease or the existence of multiple risk factors for a future heart attack.

The best way to determine if a person has hypertension is to monitor blood pressure regularly. Take blood pressure at different times of the day while performing various activities and record reading for future review by a doctor.

Many stores have free blood pressure stations and others sell home machines that are fairly precise but should be checked regularly for accuracy.

VA Makes Changes to "My HealtheVet" Web Site

Harnessing the power of the Internet, the VA is improving its Web-based system for providing health care information to its patients.

Under the latest improvement to VA's "My Healthe Vet" Web site, veterans will be able to update personal information and record medical data such as prescriptions. The site now allows veterans to record their personal information and medical data-including emergency contacts, health care providers and insurance prescriptions, tests and allergies- in a private, secure Internet environment. Eventually, veterans will be able to receive their medical records from VA online. Another new feature will be a "Learn About" tab, which will lead veterans to a variety of topics in health education.

VA launched My Healthe Vet on Veterans Day 2003. The site is located on the Internet at www.myhealthe.va.gov.

Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) in the State of Georgia

Name/City	Address	Telephone
Albany	417 4th Avenue Albany, GA 31701	229-446-9000
Atlanta (Midtown)	77 Peachtree Place, N.W. Atlanta, GA 30309	404-347-7264
Columbus	1310 13th Street Columbus, GA 31906	706-257-7200
Lawrenceville	1970 Riverside Parkway Lawrenceville, GA 30043	404-417-1750
Macon	5398 Thomaston Road, Suite B Macon, GA 31220	478-476-8161
Oakwood/NE Georgia	3931 Munday Mill Road Oakwood, GA 30566	404-728-8210
Savannah	325 West Montgomery Crossroads Savannah, GA 31406	912-920-0214
Smyrna	562 Concord Road Smyrna, GA 30082	404-417-1760
Valdosta	3123 North Ashley Street Valdosta, GA 31601	229-293-0162

Lost Your TRICARE Eligibility?

Did you purchase Medicare Part B? Most TRICARE beneficiaries entitled to Medicare Part A must purchase Medicare Part B to retain eligibility for their TRICARE benefits. Active duty family members are the one exception. They are not required to purchase Medicare Part B until the active duty service member/spouse or retirees.

The Medicare Modernization of Act of 2003 provides a Special Enrollment Period (SEP) – initially ending on December 31, 2004 but currently extended by the Social Security Administration (SSA) into 2005 for TRICARE beneficiaries to purchase to Medicare Part B. It is also authorizes a refund for penalty surcharges paid in 2004. Contact the SSA to enroll in Medicare Part B immediately without penalty for late enrollment. Once enrolled in Medicare Part B, TRICARE coverage will start the same day as Medicare Part B coverage.

Beneficiaries who have questions regarding enrollment in Medicare Part B or enrollment premium surcharges paid in 2004 should call the SSA at 1-800-722-1213 or visit their local Social Security office. TRICARE beneficiaries who paid late Medicare enrollment premium surcharges in 2004 may be entitled to reimbursement.

Additional information is available on the SSA website at www.ssa.gov/legislation the Medicare website at www.medicare.gov/medicarereform/Tricare_factsheet.pdf and the TRICARE web site at www.tricare.osd.mil.

Highlights from 2005 Service Officer School Jekyll Island May 17-20

Photos By Roy Hamby



Commissioner
Pete Wheeler



Grant Singleton
Assistant Director
VA Regional
Office – Atlanta



Lindee Lenox
Acting Director
Memorial Program
Services
National Cemetery
Administration
Washington, D.C.



Commissioner Wheeler welcomes Thursday morning's
Medical Panelist



Judge William Moorman
U. S. Court of Appeals
for Veterans' Claims
Washington, D.C.

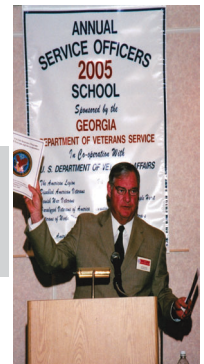


Gordon Mansfield
VA's Deputy Secretary
Washington, D.C.



Ron Garvin, Chairman
VA Board of Veterans' Appeals
Washington, D.C.

Joe McCann
Deputy Assistant Director
VA Insurance Center
Philadelphia, PA



Michael McLendon
Deputy Assistant Secretary
Plans & Policy, USDVA
Washington, D.C.



Following his keynote address to conference
attendees Friday morning, VA's Deputy
Secretary Gordon Mansfield receives his
official appointment as an "Admiral" in
Georgia's Navy to the Governor's Staff from
Commissioner Wheeler.

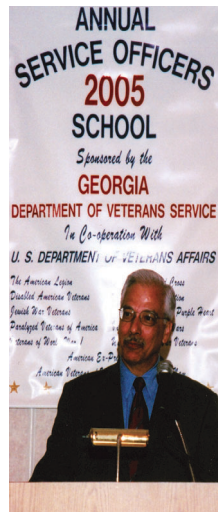
Below, Commissioner Wheeler (center) with department employees who received Georgia's "Faithful Service Award" after a special presentation at the conclusion of this year's school. From left to right are: James Price, Thomasville, 5 years; William Tucker, Clarkesville, 5 years; Brian Zeringue, Central Office, 5 years; Judy Johnson, Dalton, 15 years; Liz Hunnicutt, Statesboro, 20 years; Sandra Wood, Tifton, 25 years; Melanie Lamb, Milledgeville, 5 years; Vivian Howard, Milledgeville, 30 years; Mylene Brett, Conyers, 15 years.



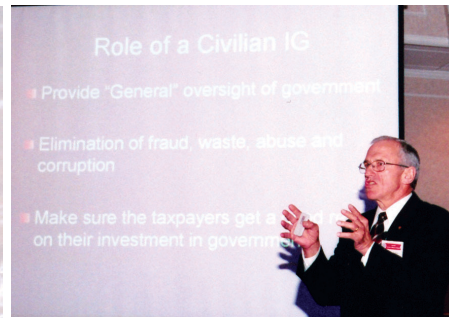
Georgia veterans...guardians of liberty



Sandra Wood of Tifton, Liz Hunnicutt, of Statesboro and Vickie King of Americus work the registration desk on day one of the conference.



Frederico Juarbe
Assistant Secretary
Veterans Employment & Training
U.S. Dept. of Labor
Washington, D.C.



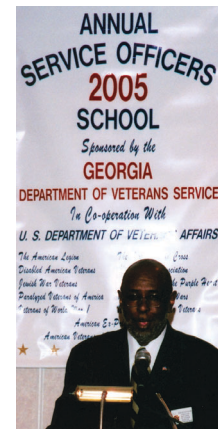
James Sehorn
Inspector General
State of Georgia



Robert Spanogle
National Adjutant
The American Legion
Indianapolis, IN



Jack Leonard
National Service Director
Military Order of the Purple Heart
Springfield, VA



William Bradshaw
Director, National Veterans Service
Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S.
Washington, D.C.



Mike Brinck
Staff Director
Veterans Affairs Committee
U.S. House of Representative
Washington, D.C.



Peter Gaytan
National Director
Veterans Affairs &
Rehab Commission
The American Legion
Washington, D.C.



Barry Jesinoski
Assistant National Service Director
Disabled American Veterans
Washington, D.C.



Wednesday morning opening session

Georgia veterans...guardians of liberty

48th Brigade Combat Team Starts Mission with Send Off at Fort Stewart

Georgia Department of Defense Website,
May 2005

Bands played, soldiers marched and wives, mothers, children and friends cried Saturday as the 48th Brigade Combat Team was given a formal send off ceremony at Fort Stewart, Ga. The unit, more than 4,000 strong, headed for its year long mission to Iraq.

Dignitaries, including Governor Sonny Perdue, Georgia's Adjutant General, Maj. Gen. David B. Poythress and First Army Commander, Lt. Gen. Russell Honoré, and Georgia Senator Johnny Isakson, joined the thousands of relatives who watched the Brigade on parade.

Gov. Perdue praised the assembled troops for their courage and later presented Brig. Gen. Stewart Rodeheaver, commander of the 48th, with a Georgia flag to accompany his unit to Iraq.



Georgia veterans...guardians of liberty



Maj. Gen. Poythress, who as Adjutant General oversees Georgia's National Guard, told the troops that theirs was "an historic mission" and wished the men and women of the 48th "God Speed". He added that the Guard would look after their families while they were gone.

This is the largest deployment of Georgia Guardsmen to a combat zone since World War II. The 48th was mobilized during Desert Storm in 1990, and sent to the National Training Center to prepare for the desert warfare, but the conflict concluded before the unit could be deployed.

Lt. Gen. Honoré few words received the loudest cheers as he declared the 48th "ready to fight!" "They set training records . . . they fired more ammunition than any brigade I've ever seen." Brig. Gen. Rodeheaver, acknowledging

the salutes and praise of families and dignitaries declared that the 48th "is the best unit I've ever worked with . . . we promise you we will do you proud!"

Following the formal ceremony, the Brigade members and their



families were given approximately 90 minutes say final farewells before troops reported to their barracks to prepare for deployment.



New Members Appointed to Advisory Committee on Women Veterans

VA NewsRelease March, 2005

Colonel Shirley Ann Quarles of Stone Mountain, Director, women's health research initiatives program and colonel in the Army Nurse Corps of the U.S. Army Reserves, has been appointed as one of six new members to the Advisory Committee on Women Veterans, an expert panel that advises Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson on issues and programs affecting women veterans.

Score Counselors Help Vets, National Guard and Reservist Soldiers

The Newsletter for Small Business Counselors Feb-March 2005

SCORE has launched a special Web site section at www.score.org/veteran.html to better serve the veteran National Guard and military reservist community. SCORE volunteer counselors are prepared to help small business owners leaving and returning from active duty with business readiness plans, emergency loan applications, business recovery and other business issues.

Veterans, National Guard and reserve members can seek 24/7 online business help from SCORE business counselors at www.score.org. Web site visitors can click on SCORE's homepage "Find a Counselor by Expertise" link and then select the keyword "veteran" or "national guard & reserve."

SCORE seeks additional online volunteers who are familiar with the business issues that veterans, National Guard and reservists face.

"This advisory committee contributes to the success of VA programs affecting women veterans," Nicholson said. "It helps VA strengthen health care, benefits, rehabilitation, outreach and other programs for women veterans."

Established in 1983, the 14-member advisory committee makes recommendations for administrative and legislative changes to VA policies. The committee members are appointed to two-year terms.

The new committee members also include Dr. Jacqueline Morgan from Seattle; Carlene Narcho from Fort Apache, Ariz.; Lorna Papke-Dupouy from Greenfield Center, N.Y.; Capt. Emily Sanford from Huntington Beach, Calif.; and Chief Master

Sgt. Sara Sellers from Johnson City, Tenn.

Women veterans are one of the fastest growing segments of the veteran population. There are approximately 1.7 million women veterans. They comprise 6.5 percent of the total veteran population and 6 percent of all veterans who use VA health care services. VA estimates that by 2010 women veterans will comprise 10 percent of veterans using VA health care services.

VA has women veterans program managers at 158 hospitals to assist these veterans on health issues and approximately 73 women veterans coordinators to assist on benefits issues.

Quarles is also the wife of Freeman Walker retired Assistant Medical Director VAMC, Decatur.

Home Ownership more Affordable for Veterans

The Veterans Benefits Improvement Act of 2004, which took effect December, 2004, establishes changes in VA's Home Loan Guarantee Program which makes home ownership more affordable for many veterans.

Changes under the law mean veterans will be able to get no-down-payment loans of up to \$359,700, while the previous ceiling was \$240,000. The new law allows VA to guarantee one-year adjustable rate mortgages (ARMs) and it extends, through 2008, VA's "hybrid ARM

program," which allows veterans to lock in a favorable interest rate for at least three years. The law also allows for loan limits to keep pace with rising home values.

VA-guaranteed home loans are made by banks, and mortgage companies to veterans, service members and reservists. With VA guaranteeing part of the loan, veterans can receive a good interest rate without having to make a down-payment.

More information about VA home loan benefits is available on VA's website at <http://www.homeloans.va.gov>.

Survivor Benefit Plan Open Season set to Begin October 1st

A one-year Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) open enrollment season, a provision of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005 is scheduled to begin October 1, 2005.

Although complete details have not yet been determined, here's what is known at this time:

- ◆ During the open season, retirees not currently participating in the SBP will be permitted to elect SBP. Retirees participating in the SBP at a reduced base amount will be permitted to increase the base amount. Lastly retirees who currently have child only coverage will be permitted to add spouse or former spouse coverage to the existing child.

- ◆ Retirees must live for two years following the election in order for the coverage to become fully effective. Should the retiree die before the two-year period expires, this election shall become void, and all costs attributed to the election will be refunded to the named beneficiary of the voided election.

- ◆ There will be a buy-in premium, which will represent the costs that would have been paid for this election had it been made at the first opportunity to do so. Please note that interest and any actuarial charges necessary may be added to this amount. The costs associated with buy-in premiums are not yet available, but will be posted on the Internet at <http://www.dfas.mil> once they are available.

SBP officials point out that individuals, who have been retired for many years, may find the buy-in premiums high and feel it's cost prohibitive, but urge each retired member to consider the benefits before deciding not to elect coverage.

Recent legislation has greatly enhanced the plan by eliminating the age 62 offset over the next three and a half years. The offset originally reduced the SBP annuity from 55 percent to 35 percent when the annuitant reached 62 and became eligible for Social Security based on the retired member's work record.

Members of the services retiree councils and numerous military related organizations have long supported the offset elimination which will be accomplished by increasing the annuities paid to survivors, who are 62 years and older, from the current 35 percent of retired pay to the following percentages:

- 40% beginning Oct. 1, 2005
- 45% beginning April 1, 2006
- 50% beginning April 1, 2007 and 55% beginning April 1, 2008.

More information will be published as it becomes available.

Retirees are asked not to presently contact the retired activities branches of their respective service because they do not have additional information at this time.

VA Geriatric Research

Veteran population aging is a major issue confronting the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Today 9.6 million veterans age 65 or older represent 38 percent of the total veteran population. They are expected to reach 45 percent by 2030.

As in the general U.S. population, those age 85 or older are the fastest growing segment of the veteran population, representing 3 percent of current veterans.

In the forefront of research on aging, the VA established the Geriatric Research, Education and Clinical Center (GRECC) program in 1975 to increase basic knowledge of the aging process, share that knowledge with other health-care providers, and improve the overall quality of care for elderly veterans. Their research includes biomedical, applied clinical, health services and rehabilitation research.

Today VA's 21 GRECC's lead in gerontology and geriatrics, applying basic research to clinical programs. Here are some examples of recent GRECC research:

- ❖ The Baltimore GRECC is exploring exercise-training strategies in rehabilitation of stroke patients.
- ❖ The Bedford division of the New England GRECC is examining factors affecting quality of life in advanced dementia.
- ❖ Investigators at the Palo Alto, California GRECC are studying age-related muscle loss.
- ❖ At the Seattle/American Lake GRECC, the role of disrupted insulin metabolism in Alzheimer's disease and adult-onset diabetes mellitus is under investigation.

For more information go to <http://www1.va.gov/opa/fact/gersrch.html>.

Memorial Garden Dedicated at University of Georgia

The following are excerpts from Commissioner Wheeler's remarks delivered at the April 13th, dedication ceremony of the University of Georgia's campus Memorial Garden. The garden is a tribute to UGA students who "made the greatest sacrifice a person can make."



"We are gathered here this morning to pay a sincere and deep and a grateful tribute to the brave men and women who were students here at the University of GA. These men and women made for our Nation for you and for me the greatest sacrifice a person can make. They served and fought and died so that we might be safe and free. And we are safe and free because of their sacrifice."

"We are here this morning to dedicate this memorial garden to the memory of the dead and to the conscience of the living and to the heritage of those yet unknown."

"All of us have come here this morning in a common cause, in a unity of spirit."

True, some came for different reasons:

To remember a husband, a wife, a father, a son or a brother.

To remember a neighbor or a friend or a buddy in the service. I remember my dear friends who were students here from 1940-1943 who



made the supreme sacrifice during World War II."

"This day is, in the span of time, but a brief moment which we have set aside from our busy lives to pause and honor and remember those we honor today."

"When we have



leave a tribute expressed in words."

"But, there is much more meaning far greater importance."

"Each of us will have gained new spiritual dedication, to the cause which has made this nation great, which has kept it free, which has given us the privileges, the joys, the opportunities, which we have."

"Many of us take for granted the many forms of freedom which we enjoy in this country, we do this because most of us have never been forced to live without freedom, all Americans should remind themselves of the sacrifices that have been made to preserve for us freedom. We honor today those who served and died so that we might be free and safe and we are safe and free because of their sacrifice."



The United States Congress created the Veterans History Project in 2000 as part of the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress. This Project honors our nation's war veterans-preserving, archiving and sharing their stories for generations to come.

Participating in the Veterans History Project is as simple as having a conversation.

- ❖ Visit www.loc.gov/vets, email vohp@loc.gov, or call toll-free message line at 1-888-

371-5848 to request an information kit.

- ❖ Identify an American War veteran or civilian worker (from WWI through current conflicts).
- ❖ Record his or her story with an audio or video recorder; assist in collecting photographs, letters, diaries, maps, or help write a memoir.
- ❖ Fill out our easy-to-complete forms, and assemble the items you are submitting.
- ❖ Send the recorded interview, along with any photographs, letters and other historical documents to the Veterans History Project at the library of Congress

Photo Highlights of the National Memorial Day Association of Georgia's Memorial Day Program at the Marietta National Cemetery



"In spite of these horrible weather conditions, I am delighted with the hundreds of folks who have made the effort to demonstrate their appreciation for what those men and women who have given their lives in protecting our freedom have done and those now in harms way are doing."

Dr. Revis Bulter, Jr.
NMDA President



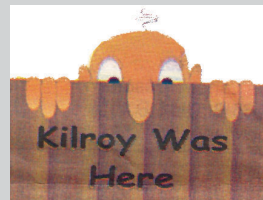
The Legend of "Kilroy"

There was one person who led or participated in every combat, training or occupation operation during World War II and the Korean War. This person could always be depended upon. GI's began to consider him the "super GI." He was one who always got there first or who was always there when he left.

We're referring, of course, to Kilroy. Somehow, this simple graffiti captured the imagination of GI's everywhere they went. The scribbled cartoon face and words showed up everywhere...worldwide.

The legend of how "Kilroy was here" starts with James J. Kilroy, a shipyard inspector during World War II. He chalked the words on bulkheads to show that he had been there and inspected the riveting in the newly constructed ship. To the troops in those ships, however, it was a complete mystery. All they knew for sure was that he had "been there first." As a joke, they began placing the graffiti wherever they (the U.S. Forces) landed or went, claiming it was already there when they first arrived.

Kilroy became the US super GI who always go there first, no matter where GI's went. It became a challenge to place the logo in the most unlikely places. It was said to be atop Mt. Everest, the Statue of Liberty, the underside of the Arch de Triumphe and scrawled in the dust on the moon. An outhouse was build for the exclusive use of Truman, Stalin



He emerged and asked his aide (in Russian), "Who is Kilroy?"

World War II UDT (Under Water Demolition, later known as Navy Seals) divers swam ashore on Japanese held islands in the Pacific to prepare the beaches for the upcoming landings by U.S. troops. They were sure to be the first GI's there. On more than one occasion, they reported seeing "Kilroy was here," scrawled on

and Churchill who were there for the Potsdam conference.

The first person to use it was Stalin.

make-shift signs or as graffiti on enemy pillbox. They, in turn, often left similar signs for the next incoming GI's.

The tradition continued in every US military theater of operations throughout and following World War II. In 1946, the Transit Company of America held a contest offering a prize of a real trolley car to person who could prove himself to be the "real" Kilroy. Nearly 40 men stepped forward to make that claim, but James Kilroy brought along officials from the shipyard and some of the riveters to help prove his authenticity. James Kilroy won the prize of the trolley car which he gave to his nine children as a Christmas gift and set it up in their front yard as a playhouse.

Commissioner Wheeler and State Veterans Service Board Member James Blaylock (far left) represented the Georgia



Department of Veterans Service at the formal retirement ceremony of long time VA Medical Center executive and friend to SDVS, Freeman Walker. Mr. Walker, Associate Medical Director for the Atlanta VAMC since 1996, retired earlier this year after some 40 years in the VA Health Administration. The Columbus, GA native and Army veteran who served in the 82D Airborne Division began his career with the VA as a Clinical Social Worker. Commissioner Wheeler is shown here presenting Mr. Walker with his official appointment as a "Lieutenant Colonel, Aide De Camp to the Governor's Staff."

2005 State Legislation Affecting Georgia's Military, Veterans & Their Dependents

(www.legis.state.ga.us/legis/GaCode/Title38.pdf)

GA CODE 20-3-485 & 20-3-486

Establishes the Georgia Hero (Helping Education Reservist and their Offspring) Scholarship. Granted for a maximum of four award years in the sum of \$2,000.00 per award year. Limited to \$8,000.00. Eligible student means a person who is enrolled as a full-time or part-time student in an approved school; meets Georgia residency requirements and who remain a citizen of the state while receiving funds under this law. Is a member of the Georgia National Guard or a reserve component of the U.S. Armed Forces having completed at least one qualifying turn of service. Is a child whose parent was a member of the Georgia National Guard. Is 25 years of age or younger. Must meet certain criteria.

GA CODE 40-2-86.10

There shall be issued beginning in 2006 special and distinctive vehicle license plates honoring families with a member serving in the military. The license plate will contain the words "Family Member Serving" upon payment of a manufacturing fee of \$25.00 in addition to the regular motor vehicle registration fee a license plate honoring families with a member serving in the military will be issued.

GA CODE 40-2-86.10

There shall be issued beginning in 2006 special and distinctive license plates identifying persons supporting Georgia troops. Upon payment of a manufacturing fee of \$25.00 in addition to the regular motor vehicle registration fee a license plate will be issued identifying him or her as a person who supports Georgia troops. The license plate will contain the words "Support Georgia Troops."

GA CODE 15-12-1

Exemption from Jury Duty-any service member on ordered military duty for a period of 90 days or longer and the spouse of any such service member who requests to be excused or deferred shall be excused or deferred from jury duty upon presentation of either a copy of the official military order or a written verification signed by the service members' commanding officer.

GA CODE 27-2-4

A member of the regular or reserve components of the US Armed Forces, the US Coast Guard, the Georgia National Guard, or the Georgia Air National Guard who was on active duty for a period of 90 days or longer shall be entitled to an honorary hunting and fishing license to hunt and fish in this state without payment of fees for a period of one year following issuance. Must provide proof of discharge.

GA CODE 38-2-9

Any member of the organized militia who has reached the age of 64 years may be retired for the reason of age and transferred to the state retired list by the Governor.

GA CODE 40-5-37

Any service member whose Georgia drivers license expired while such service member was serving on active duty outside the state shall be permitted to operate a motor vehicle in accordance with such expired license and shall not be charged with the violation for a period of six months from the date of discharge from active duty or reassignment to a location within the state.

GA CODE 43-1-31

Any service member who license to practice a profession issued pursuant to any provision of this title expired while such service member was serving on active duty outside the state shall be permitted to practice such profession in accordance with such expired license and shall not be charged with a violation of this title related to practicing a profession with an expired license for a period of six months from the date of discharge from active duty or reassignment to a location within the state. Must be ordered to federal duty for a period of 90 days or longer to qualify.

GA CODE 44-7-22

Any active duty member of the regular or reserve component of the US Armed Forces, the US Coast Guard, the Georgia National Guard, or the Georgia Air National Guard on ordered federal duty for a period of 90 days or longer may terminate his or her residential rental or lease agreement by providing the landlord a written notice of termination. Certain criteria must be met.

GA CODE 46-5-8

Any active duty member of the regular or reserve component of the United States armed forces, the United States Coast Guard, the Georgia National Guard, or the Georgia Air National Guard on ordered federal duty for a period of 90 days or longer may terminate his or her wireless telecommunications service contract by providing the provider with a written notice of termination, effective the date specified in the notice, which date shall be at least 30 days after receipt of the notice by the provider. Certain criteria must be met.

GA CODE 34-8-194

Is amended to provide that leaving an employer because of the transfer of a spouse from one military assignment to another shall not disqualify a person from unemployment benefits.

GA CODE 38-4-70

Removes the residency requirements for Georgia veterans eligible for retirement in the Georgia veterans cemetery. Eligibility criteria for internment are the same as required for internment in a national cemetery.

GA CODE 43-12-2

Adds that the Department of Veterans Service can verify a veteran's eligibility for an exemption from occupational taxes, administration fees and regulatory fees when applying for a business license.

GA CODE 48-7-6

Any member of the national guard or any reserve component of the armed services of the United States who serves on active duty for at least 90 consecutive days shall be granted an extension without fee charged for such extension of any annual license or registration otherwise required under other provision of law by the state or any agency, department, board, license of commission of the state.

GA CODE 48-7-29.9

A taxpayer shall be allowed a credit against the tax imposed by Code Section 48-7-20 in an amount not to exceed the amount expended for qualified life insurance premiums. Shall be claimed and allowed in the year in which the majority of such days are served. Shall apply with respect to each taxable year in which members serve for such qualifying period of time.

Toll Free Numbers For Contacting the VA

VA Benefits: 1-800-827-1000

➤ *Education -Home Loan –Disability- Medical Care*

➤ *Burial- Life Insurance-Sexual Trauma*

Life Insurance: 1-800-669-8477

Education (GI Bill): 1-800-442-4551

Health Care: Benefits: 1-877-222-8387

Income Verification and Means Testing: 1-800-929-8387

Mammography Helpline: 1-888-492-7844

Gulf War/Agent Orange Helpline: 1-800-749-8387

Status of Headstones and Markers: 1-800-697-6947

Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD): 1-800-829-4833

For health care services contact your nearest VAMC

➤ *Augusta – 706-733-0188*

➤ *Decatur – 404-321-6111*

➤ *Dublin- 478-272-1210*

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